

The 1996 Amendments to SDWA
Improving Public Access to Information and Increasing Opportunities for Public Participation

Consumer Confidence Reports

Every community water system must provide its customers with an annual water quality report starting in 1999. The reports tell customers about the source of their water supply, the level of any regulated contaminants detected in their water, and the health effects of contaminants detected above the safety limit.

Source Water Assessments

No later than 2003, states will be examining each of the nation's drinking water sources to identify contaminant threats and determine how susceptible drinking water sources are to contamination. Communities may assist their state and water system in conducting the assessments, and the states must make the results of the assessments available to the public.

Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF)

This federal grant program provides money for states, who, in turn, provide loans to water systems to upgrade their facilities and ensure compliance with drinking water standards. A portion of each state's federal grant money can be set aside for several specific purposes, including acquiring land to buffer drinking water sources from contamination and funding other local protection activities. Each year, every state develops an intended use plan for how it intends to use all funds, including a list of water systems that will be receiving loan assistance to upgrade their treatment facilities. This list is available to the public, and states are required to seek public input into the development of their intended use plan.

State Capacity Development Strategies

By October 2000, states must develop strategies to ensure that all public water systems have the technical, financial and managerial capability to ensure that safe drinking water is provided to their customers. States are required to involve the public in the development of these strategies, and to make the final strategy available to the public.

Operator Certification Revisions

States that need to revise their existing programs to certify operators of public water systems, in order to meet new requirements, must submit their program changes to EPA by February 2001. These states must obtain public input while revising their programs, and are encouraged to use citizen advisory committees to help implement these programs.

Public Notification Improvements

Public water systems must notify their customers when they violate a drinking water standard. EPA is revising the existing Public Notification rule to better tailor the form, manner, and timing of the notices to the relative risk to health. The proposed rule will make notification easier and more effective for both water systems and the public.

New Publicly-Accessible Drinking Water Contaminant Databases

EPA has collected information from water systems on the occurrence of contaminants in drinking water to assist in its decision-making about which contaminants to regulate in the future and which standards for regulated contaminants to reexamine. The data is accessible to the public via the Internet at www.epa.gov/enviro/ under "Drinking Water Occurrence" and "Drinking Water Microbial and Disinfection Byproduct Information."

Annual Compliance Report

Every year states must publish a report listing systems in their jurisdiction with violations of federal drinking water standards. EPA must summarize this information in a national report and make it available to the public.

Health Care Provider Outreach and Education

EPA and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) must jointly establish a national health care provider training and public education campaign to inform both the professional health care provider community and the general public about waterborne disease and the symptoms that may be caused by infectious agents, including microbial contaminants.

Source: EPA. “[25 Years of the Safe Drinking Water Act: History and Trends](http://www.epa.gov/safewater/sdwa/trends.html).” EPA 816-R-99-007. December 1999. <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/sdwa/trends.html>